

How to Walk

Psalm 119

- ❑ Psalm 119 is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible. It has 22 stanzas, each consisting of eight verses. Each stanza begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in sequence. (This is called an alphabetic acrostic.) Psalm 119 reflects the psalmist's deep devotion to the LORD and the importance of "the law of the LORD" in the psalmist's life.¹

Blessed are...

- ❑ Psalm 119 begins with the words "Blessed² are..." Read Psalm 119:1-2.
 1. In these verses, what are the characteristics of those who are blessed?³

- ❑ Those who are "blameless" stay on the path of purity (*110:9a*). How can they stay on the path of purity?



Staying on the Right Path

- ❑ Read Psalm 119:9-16.⁴ Verses 9-10 express ideas similar to verses 1-2. The blessed person – the person who stays on the path of purity – lives according to God's word, and seeks God with all his/her heart.
 - ? Do you truly live according to God's word? Do you truly seek God with all your heart? How can you stay on the right path? How can you grow in your devotion to God?
- ❑ Verses 10-16 record the psalmist's prayer, which includes the following elements:
 - The psalmist's attitude (what he feels, *why* he does what he does)
 - The psalmist's acknowledgements (what he knows he needs from God)
 - The psalmist's actions (what he does, commits to do, or has done)⁵

The Psalmist's Attitudes

2. What attitudes are evident in verses 10-16?⁶ Why do you think the psalmist feels this way?

¹ Psalm 119 starts like Psalm 1. As discussed in Lesson 13, 'the law of the LORD' applies to God's written word in general (the Bible). The psalmist uses eight words for God's law: *tôrâ* – law; *dābār* – word; *mišpāṭîm* – laws or ordinances; *ēdōt* – statutes or testimonies; *mišwōt* – commands; *ḥuqqîm* – decrees or statutes; *piqqûdîm* – precepts; *'imrâ* – promise or word. While different in particular meaning, these words serve as synonyms for God's law.

² 'blessed' (Hebrew *'ashrê*) – 'conveys the idea of happiness that flows from a sense of well-being and rightness' (Gerald H. Wilson, *The NIV Application Commentary, Psalms Volume I* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 93-94).

³ 'blameless' is not 'sinless' (1 John 1:10), but refers to faithfulness to God, obedience, and living above reproach.

⁴ The passage begins, 'How can a young person stay on the path of purity?' (119:9a). 'young person' is literally 'young man' (*na'ar*) but the answer to the question applies to both male and female, and persons of any age.

⁵ Certainly, the psalmist's attitudes and actions are tied together, but some of his actions could be considered disciplines or practices that help him to better live according to God's word.

⁶ The psalmist's attitude toward God and his word is revealed in his seeking, praising, rejoicing and delighting. Obviously, he is convinced of the surpassing value of knowing God and living according to his word.

- 📖 “The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.” (119:72, *NIV*; cp. 119:127)
- 📖 “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (119:103, *NIV*)

The Psalmist's Acknowledgements

3. What does the psalmist need from God? (Consider the verses where God is the subject or implied subject.)⁷ How can we apply the psalmist's example to *our* need to know and live according to God's word?

- 📖 “teach me your decrees” (119:12b)⁸
- 📖 “Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.” (119:34, *NIV*; cp 119:73, 125, 144, 169)



The Psalmist's Actions

4. What actions (including practices and disciplines) are evident in verses 10-16?⁹ What do they mean? For each of the psalmist's actions, what is a practical application for our lives today?

Walking in Christ

- ☐ “Walking according to God's word” ultimately means “walking in Christ” (*Colossians 2:6*). Through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, we are united with him, and we “walk in newness of life” (*Romans 6:4*). Thus we “ought to walk in the same way in which [Jesus] walked” (*1 John 2:6*) and “walk according to the Spirit” who empowers us (*Romans 8:4*).

Reflection/Application

- What is your deepest desire? What are you seeking? If you are not seeking God, then maybe you don't understand or believe who He is. Continue to study the Bible (God's word) and sincerely pray, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your [word]” (119:18).
- As a believer, review this lesson and ask, “Am I truly living according God's word? Am I seeking God with all my heart? What attitudes, acknowledgements, and actions (practices, disciplines)¹⁰ are needed in my life? What practical application can I apply to my life today?” Ask God to transform and empower you as you seek to walk in a manner pleasing to Him.

⁷ God is the implied subject in verses 10b and 12b.

⁸ The words ‘teach me’ are found 11 times in Psalm 119 (verses 12, 26, 29, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171). Also see Psalm 25:4-5; 27:11; 86:11; 143:10. God is the One (by His Spirit) who teaches us and gives us understanding. Thus we should pray: ‘Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.’ (*Psalm 25:4-5, NIV*)

⁹ For example, ‘I have hidden (stored up, treasured) your word in my heart’ (v. 11); ‘with my lips, I recount (*sāpar* – speak, tell, declare)’ (v. 13; cp. 119:46); ‘I meditate’ (*śīah*) – to go over a matter in one's mind (v. 15; cp. 119:23, 78, 97, 99, 148). He also says what he will *not* do – neglect God's word (v. 16).

¹⁰ Examples include ‘hiding God's word in your heart,’ and ‘meditating on God's word throughout each day.’